

# Open Letter: Civil society coalition urges Canada to stop all arms transfers to Israel

September 19, 2024

Dear Minister Joly,

We, the undersigned civil society organizations, are deeply concerned at the enduring devastation in Gaza. Canada risks complicity in this humanitarian catastrophe through its ongoing transfer of military goods destined to Israel, exports which are incompatible with its obligations under the [Arms Trade Treaty](#) (ATT). As organizations committed to upholding human rights, the protection of civilians, peace, and justice—several of whom are present in Gaza and seeing daily the grave consequences of the transfer of weapons to conflict parties—we urge the Government of Canada to take immediate action to cease all exports of arms and arms components to Israel, as well as any and all transfers for which Israel will be the end user.

Over the last year, more than [41,000 Palestinians](#) have been killed in Israel's military campaign across the Gaza Strip, the majority being women and children. More than 95,000 have been injured and critical civilian infrastructure has been destroyed. Over the last few weeks only, Israel attacked at least seven schools. They add to the long list of schools, hospitals, refugee camps and places of worship hit since October—many of these crowded with displaced civilians sheltering from the violence.

This year marks the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of the ATT, which Canada acceded to five years ago. Under the ATT, Canada is prohibited from exporting arms if those transfers would be used to commit serious crimes under international law including disproportionate and indiscriminate attacks. Moreover, states parties to the Treaty cannot authorize arms transfers if there is an overriding risk they could be misused, including to commit or facilitate serious violations of international humanitarian law (IHL)—the very type of behaviour that has become routine by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). These obligations are also reflected under domestic law in [Canada's Export and Import Permits Act](#) (EIPA).

In addition, the International Court of Justice's (ICJ) [order to halt Israel's military offensive in Rafah](#) due to the plausible [risk of genocide](#) as well as its July 19<sup>th</sup> [Advisory Opinion](#) which found that Israel's prolonged occupation of the occupied Palestinian territory is unlawful are significant international legal findings that call for concrete policy changes, and not just on the part of Israel. Canada needs to urgently review its own cooperation practices to ensure they prevent international crimes and do not contribute towards any further violations of international law.

To be sure, earlier this year it was reported that your government had paused the further authorization of arms transfers to Israel, which was a definitive step in the right direction. However, since then, the extent of this policy has not been officially outlined and proposed

permits for arms transfers to Israel have not been denied but rather [left in limbo](#) for future authorization. While your recently announced suspension of approximately 30 previously approved permits is welcome, this coalition urges you to take the principled step in revoking all extant permits, including those that remain active and under which military transfers to Israel would otherwise [continue unabated](#).

We are extremely concerned that these previously authorized transfers include at least [\\$95 million in Canadian military goods](#) that could be exported to Israel by the end of 2025, despite the ongoing and [well-documented pattern of IHL and human rights violations](#) by Israel in Gaza and the West Bank. The continuous arming of Israel by Canada contradicts our country's commitment to upholding IHL and human rights. It also undermines efforts to end hostilities in Gaza through the implementation of a [ceasefire, which Canada has pledged to support](#).

Last week, it was [reported](#) that the Canadian government intends to block the proposed sale of US\$61 million in high explosive mortar cartridges and related equipment to Israel via the U.S. We urge transparency on this issue and, most critically, call on the Canadian government to close the long-standing loopholes afforded to arms transfers to and through the U.S. which could allow weapons to reach Israel despite Canada's stance against new arms exports to the country.

Canada cannot credibly prioritize diplomatic solutions and support for peace while simultaneously contributing to the arming of a conflict in which violations of IHL are persistent and well-documented. By halting all military exports that could be used in the hostilities—including those via the United States—Canada will not only comply with its international and domestic legal obligations, but also take a principled stance in advancing the rule of law, human rights and compliance with IHL, thereby reinforcing its international reputation as a defender of these values.

We remain committed to working with the Government of Canada to meet its legal obligations, uphold our shared values and to promote peace and justice both at home and abroad. We trust that you will give this matter the urgent attention it requires and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Amnesty International Canada (English speaking)  
Amnistie internationale Canada (francophone)  
Anglican Church of Canada  
Canadian Friends Service Committee  
Canadian Muslim Public Affairs Council  
Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME)  
CARE Canada  
Cooperation Canada  
Development and Peace - Caritas Canada  
Doctors of the World Canada

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada  
Human Concern International  
Humanity & Inclusion Canada  
Independent Jewish Voices Canada  
The International Development and Relief Foundation (IDRF)  
Islamic Relief Canada  
KAIROS Canada  
Labour Against the Arms Trade  
Mennonite Central Committee Canada  
Oxfam Canada  
Oxfam-Québec  
Project Ploughshares  
The Rideau Institute  
Save the Children Canada  
The United Church of Canada  
United Network for Justice and Peace in Palestine and Israel (UNJPPI)  
World BEYOND War